

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY BOARD

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In the matter of: :
: :
THE INVESTIGATION OF THE :
CAPSIZING OF THE WATER TAXI : Docket No:
LADY D IN BALTIMORE HARBOR, : DCA04MM015
MARYLAND :
ON MARCH 6, 2004 :
: :
INTERVIEW OF: :
: :
ATC ASA JOHNSON :
NAVAL RESERVE CENTER :
: :
- - - - -x

NTSB
Office of Marine Safety
MS-10
490 L'Enfant Plaza East SW
Washington, DC 20594
Wednesday, March 10, 2004

The above captioned interview convened, upon agreement
of the parties at 8:50 a.m.

BEFORE:

Mariette Burer
National Transportation Safety Board

P R O C E E D I N G S

8:50 a.m.

MS. BURER: Okay, today is Wednesday, the tenth of March, and it is approximately ten 'til nine. I'm conducting an interview with Naval reserve. My name is Mariette Burer from the National Transportation Safety Board. And what we'll do is go around introduce ourselves. So, to my left is -

ATC JOHNSON: My name is ATC Air Warfare Asa Johnson.

MS. BURER: Bill?

MR. WOODY: Bill Woody, NTSB.

LT. BARANOWSKI: Lieutenant Scott Baranowski, Coast Guard, Sector Baltimore.

MS. BURER: I guess what we would like to do is maybe get a little bit of history from you, your educational background and then experience, work experience, and then take us to the accident incident from what kind of educational experience do you have?

ATC JOHNSON: Well, my education, I graduated from Carver Vocational Technical High School here in Baltimore with a trade in welding. I have approximately two years of college. And I joined the Navy as an aviation electronics technician. I worked on A-4's, 2-3, aircraft ... and C-130s. So that's pretty much my educational background. I also have a background in quality assurance. I've been trained as

1 a qualified instructor for the Navy as well.

2 MS. BURER: When did you join the Navy?

3 ATC JOHNSON: I joined the Navy in 1984.

4 MS. BURER: 1984, okay. Can you tell me a
5 little bit of your past 72 hours before the incident,
6 of what your regular routine is?

7 ATC JOHNSON: My regular routine, I guess I
8 would say Friday - Friday on?

9 MS. BURER: Right.

10 ATC JOHNSON: Again, I'm the Command Chief
11 here, so I'm the senior enlisted advisor for the full-
12 time support to the commanding officer. I just advise
13 him on any situations that arise with the troops, as
14 well as running the training department. So I process
15 every training application through the inrow (ph)
16 system, so that sailors are able to deploy to different
17 training opportunities.

18 MS. BURER: So on Friday, what is your normal
19 work hours start? Or when do you rise, and then when
20 does your day end?

21 ATC JOHNSON: When do I show up for work?

22 MS. BURER: Or when do you wake up and then
23 what do you do?

24 ATC JOHNSON: On a normal day, I usually wake
25 up at approximately five a.m., have to get myself ready
26 and I have a - I'm a single parent, so I have a seven-
27 year-old, so I have to get him up as well, get him

1 dressed and drop him off at the baby sitters so he can
2 be picked up for school, before I come to work.

3 MS. BURER: Right. And go ahead.

4 ATC JOHNSON: Okay, and then I usually arrive
5 at work around seven, seven a.m. to begin my day,
6 reading e-mails that I might have received, followed by
7 a morning briefing with the troops. And then I go into
8 my day, and that could be customer service or could be
9 inputting training, researching staff schools, or I
10 also oversee things with the boat department, things
11 with the ... pay, making sure the reservists get paid on
12 time. There's quite a bit of things all during the
13 day.

14 MS. BURER: All right, and when does your
15 typical day end at work?

16 ATC JOHNSON: My typical day ends at
17 approximately 1600 or four o'clock.

18 MS. BURER: Then you pick up your son -

19 ATC JOHNSON: And then I leave and go pick up
20 my son from the baby sitter, and the I go back to
21 Greenbelt, Maryland, where I live.

22 MS. BURER: How long of a drive is that from
23 here?

24 ATC JOHNSON: It's about a half hour drive.

25 MS. BURER: And then when do you actually go
26 to bed?

27 ATC JOHNSON: Usually I go to bed at

1 approximately ten p.m.

2 MS. BURER: Okay. Do you have much
3 experience with rudders, and boating and diving and
4 whatever ...

5 ATC JOHNSON: No, I - I - you know, the guys
6 kind of joke me around here because I'm an airedale,
7 and they're the surface type folks. So my background
8 is aviation, so they have most of the boating skills to
9 do things on ships. My aircraft were too big to go
10 airboard a carrier, so I don't have any sea experience.

11 MS. BURER: Okay. Well can you take us from
12 when you arrived to work on Saturday morning at
13 whatever hour you were here and then carry me all the
14 way through the end of the day.

15

16 ATC JOHNSON: Okay. On that particular day,
17 I arrived to work at approximately seven a.m.
18 Basically checked in and made sure all my folks were
19 here. I attended a meeting with all the Chief Petty
20 Officers from the various reserve units for a talk down
21 of what's going to be going on for the entire weekend.
22 And then I went into customer service mode. Just - and
23 that's basically what we do on the weekend is a lot of
24 customer service, all during the day.

25 At approximately 1600 I heard one of my First
26 Class yelling, "Call 911, the water taxi overturned."
27 So I began to exit the building from the second deck

1 through the back of the building and proceeded to
2 enter the boat. At that time the gate was locked and
3 we had to unlock the gate, and some of the guys went
4 down into the engine room on the boat to try to get the
5 boat started.

6 I directed some of the guys to retrieve as
7 many life preservers as they could, for the safety of
8 my crew and what we could spare for anyone in the
9 water. We were able to get the boat started and we
10 backed the boat out and headed towards the people in
11 the water.

12 As we approached the personnel in the water,
13 we could began to hear them say, "There's people under
14 the boat." So what we did was we pulled up and we
15 dropped our bow down, the boat, and we proceeded to tie
16 their boat to our boat, and we began to kind of walk
17 them across and place them in our craft.

18 And once we got everyone on board, we began
19 to see if we could kind of tip the boat back over using
20 the bow of our boat, the flap that drops down. The
21 ramp. And once that happened, bodies - we could see
22 bodies in the water, floating in the water.
23 Approximately maybe, I'm going to say 50 yards off the
24 starboard side of our craft, I could see bodies
25 floating. And what was really strange, the current was
26 so strong, because it seemed like in no time the bodies
27 were right up on our craft. You know, the current was

1 so strong.

2 So some of the guys began going overboard and
3 grabbing the bodies and holding on to them before they
4 were drifted away, and we were able to begin pulling
5 the bodies up on our craft and administering CPR to
6 some of the personnel.

7 I remember seeing the guy hanging over the
8 boat grabbing the little girl and I had my eye on one
9 of my Chiefs that was hanging on, clinging on to a rope
10 because he was so tired - that was Petty Officer King.
11 And he was saying "I'm getting weak" so I was concerned
12 about him, so I kept my eye on him.

13 And then some other guy came to help out. I
14 could hear Petty Officer Tate yelling over here, "Help,
15 help, help, help." So I immediately made my way to
16 where he was and I could see him holding on to a lady
17 in the water. So I reached over and grabbed a hold of
18 her and we were trying to hold her as close as possible
19 to the boat, but she was really heavy, and then we
20 asked - we signaled to the top of the boat to lower the
21 ramp a little bit. And once they lowered the ramp and
22 we got some more help, we were able to pull onto the
23 boat.

24 The next thing I know, Commander Decker came
25 out of nowhere and started doing CPR on her and the
26 next thing you know, I remember the fire department
27 and the Coast Guard showing up and asked if we had

1 anyone, you know, unconscious or needing medical
2 attention - needed medical attention. And we kind of
3 passed the unconscious personnel over to their boat.

4 And then I remember we made everyone move to
5 the rear of our craft and we brought the ramp up. And
6 then we proceeded to transport those personnel back to
7 NRC Baltimore. And when we arrived here, we assisted
8 everyone from exiting our craft to -

9 Of course when we arrived in the reserve
10 center, there were several medical personnel awaiting
11 assisting these folks. I basically tried to shed my
12 clothing and get something warm on, because I had taken
13 as much clothing off to try to keep those personnel
14 warm. And I was just of like witnessing the medical
15 folks doing their thing, and also there were some
16 personnel who were cold, so I went and got heaters and
17 collected into the wall so they could stand in front of
18 the heaters and warm up.

19 And then, slowly they started to trickle out
20 of the reserve center and then we met with the chaplain
21 and he kind of gave us a few words, and they told us
22 that we had to go seek some medical treatment to make
23 sure that we were okay.

24 At approximately, I think 1800, I left the
25 reserve center to go to Bethesda Naval Hospital and at
26 Bethesda Naval Hospital they checked me out, made sure
27 I wasn't injured, checked my blood pressure, all my

1 vitals, asked me a few questions and then I was
2 released to go home. I went home, took a bath, changed
3 clothes, and by that time I was starving.

4 My fiancée arrived and she got me something
5 to eat and then we went to bed.

6 MS. BURER: Okay.

7 ATC JOHNSON: Or I tried to go to bed.

8 MS. BURER: Do you remember when, or how long
9 it took from that first person yelling "Call 911" to
10 get everything ready and to the arrival at the craft?

11 ATC JOHNSON: I would think about - anywhere
12 from seven to ten minutes to get out there to get that
13 boat clamped up and moving towards the victims.

14 MS. BURER: And then how long did it take
15 from after the seven to ten minutes to get moving, how
16 long did it take for you all to arrive at the actual
17 victims?

18 ATC JOHNSON: Transit time, I would say maybe
19 an additional two minutes - transit time.

20 MS. BURER: How many people were on your
21 boat?

22 ATC JOHNSON: I would say approximately 15 to
23 18 it seemed like. Now that's reservists and full time
24 staff.

25 MS. BURER: Combination of both.

26 ATC JOHNSON: Right, yes.

27 MS. BURER: Okay. As far as actual physical

1 bodies, it would be between 16 to 18 people on that
2 boat to go -

3 ATC JOHNSON: Heading out, yes.

4 MS. BURER: Okay. How far would you say
5 that from the dock here to the actual capsized?

6 ATC JOHNSON: I would say somewhere around
7 300 yards.

8 MS. BURER: 300 yards? Okay. Can you
9 describe a little bit about the weather conditions at
10 that time?

11 ATC JOHNSON: Oh, it was really nasty out.
12 When we came out of the building, it was just pouring
13 down rain. I mean it was - by the time I made it to
14 the boat, I remember I looked down at myself and I was
15 just soaked. I was like, well, I don't care. I don't
16 care, I'm going to keep working. And we finally got
17 everything. And I remember going out in the - when we
18 went out on the water, the waves were choppy. It was
19 overcast, still raining and - you know, it was amazing
20 because by the time everything sort of ended, the sun
21 was out - you know, you could see the sun in the sky
22 again. And it just - it was nothing like when we left.
23 The sun had came out on the way back.

24 MS. BURER: How long - as far as when you
25 first arrived at the craft, the turned-over craft, to
26 when you guys were heading back with the people that
27 you had actually rescued, how much time had elapsed

1 would you estimate?

2 ATC JOHNSON: Well, I'd have to take a guess
3 at that. If I had to take a guess, I would say about
4 45 minutes or so. It seemed like it was forever,
5 though. You know, there was a lot going on.

6 MS. BURER: So within 45 minutes, that's when
7 what I understood earlier, the weather started changing
8 and it started to become sunny out?

9 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

10 MS. BURER: Now as far as the winds and the
11 conditions of the water, was that still the same or had
12 that actually calmed down some?

13 ATC JOHNSON: Well, I'll tell you, it was
14 still - that current was still - it was still strong,
15 you know. Because you could see - when those bodies
16 were in the water, you know, it was clear they were
17 moving. You know, and before you knew it they had come
18 by the boat, and if he didn't jump out there quick,
19 they would be, who knows - way at the Key Bridge or
20 something.

21 MS. BURER: Right.

22 ATC JOHNSON: I mean it was moving.

23 MS. BURER: So they were moving actually
24 towards the Key Bridge?

25 ATC JOHNSON: Yes, they were coming kind of
26 - they were kind of moving toward the Key Bridge, but
27 then kind of toward this way as well, so, yes.

1 MS. BURER: So if I was standing on the
2 dock right now facing - they were moving -

3 ATC JOHNSON: Yes, coming - moving like that.
4 Moving east - east and ... like that.

5 MS. BURER: When - so you tied everything on,
6 there were still no people that had actually come onto
7 your craft, right? It was actually from when you
8 arrived at the turned-over boat, right. You tied -

9 ATC JOHNSON: We lowered the ramp.

10 MS. BURER: Right.

11 ATC JOHNSON: And we threw out a line.

12 MS. BURER: Right and they grabbed it.

13 ATC JOHNSON: They grabbed it and they kind
14 of tied it around the boat and looped it, and then we
15 had the other part of the rope and we just pulling,
16 pulling that craft across the water, and then what we
17 did, we had a - there just happened to be a nice hook
18 right there and the rope had a loop in it, so I put the
19 end of the rope and put it on that hook, so that kept
20 everything together.

21 And then we went out to the ramp and we
22 started grabbing people in.

23 MS. BURER: But before then, no one else had
24 yet arrived on your craft yet, right, none of the
25 passengers?

26 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

27 MS. BURER: ... so you guys were pulling their

1 boat towards you, right, and then with the ramp down,
2 the people were able to transfer from their boat -

3 ATC JOHNSON: Yes, it wasn't until we got the
4 ramp down and we got the two boats kind of merged
5 together and then they could almost step over onto our
6 ramp.

7 MS. BURER: Okay. How many people would you
8 estimate actually walked or were able to transfer from
9 their boat to your boat, without actually the people in
10 the water -

11 ATC JOHNSON: Well, I would say - gosh, I
12 don't know, maybe ten, 12, I would estimate. But there
13 was people in the water too.

14 MS. BURER: Right.

15 ATC JOHNSON: I remember at that time, one of
16 my guys jumped off the boat and jumped into the water,
17 and that was Petty Officer Neblett.

18 MS. BURER: Right.

19 ATC JOHNSON: I remember he jumped into the
20 water and he kind of swim around and he went under the
21 water to see if he could see anybody, and I was scared
22 because I'm responsible for my crew, and he came back
23 up and I was watching him the whole time, making sure
24 he was safe. And I think at that time as well, I think
25 Commander Decker went into the water, but he got people
26 out of the water into our boat, and Petty Officer Tate,
27 I think, at that time entered the water. So they were

1 helping people.

2 MS. BURER: So it was just three of them
3 basically, that were helping the people -

4 ATC JOHNSON: At that time, yes.

5 MS. BURER: How many people would you
6 estimate that you were able to pull from the water into
7 your boat?

8 ATC JOHNSON: Four, five, estimating.

9 MS. BURER: Can you describe a little bit of
10 when you said that you tried tipping the boat over,
11 right, and then you saw all these bodies floating out.

12 ATC JOHNSON: Well, it wasn't immediately.
13 It wasn't immediately. What they did was the ramp was
14 down like this, and they kind of took the ramp like a
15 lift and they kind of nudged it, just nudged it, but
16 the boat wouldn't tip, so we kind of just backed off
17 and we backed off away from it, and I think when we
18 backed away from the boat, maybe a minute we could see
19 some bodies over there. I think - I think - I remember
20 Tate saying - being the first person saying, "Look,
21 there's people floating in the water." And then before
22 you know it, they was like right up on us, you know.

23 MS. BURER: Okay.

24 ATC JOHNSON: So it could have been a - you
25 know, it might not have been that we freed the bodies,
26 because I mean they were - they were moving. If we had
27 to estimate the distance from the bodies to where the

1 boat capsized, I would say they were approximately 75
2 to 100 yards towards the other side of the bay over
3 here, away from the boat. They were over there. And
4 then they came toward - they drifted towards our boat.
5 And, you know, they were out there, so I don't know if
6 they may have been under the water and then just came
7 up or - you know.

8 MS. BURER: When you're saying away from you,
9 are you - what - east, west, north, south?

10 ATC JOHNSON: I'm going to show you, if
11 that's east, so that's north. Yes, north.

12 MS. BURER: Okay, so they were further up and
13 then actually floating towards you.

14 MR. WOODY: Might help by saying that - this
15 is the building, your east side, you face ... is east.
16 You walk in the door to go to your craft, you're pretty
17 well looking east, aren't you?

18 ATC JOHNSON: Yes - is that east?

19 MS. BURER: Yes, I understand what he's
20 saying by him saying north, east, west.

21 ATC JOHNSON: I'm thinking this is east going
22 that way.

23 MS. BURER: Right, that's the way that I see
24 it, I'm with you.

25 MR. WOODY: Oh, yes. Yes, okay, you're
26 right.

27 MS. BURER: Yes, I'm with you on that, okay.

1 MR. WOODY: You're right.

2 MS. BURER: Okay, and then when you actually
3 arrived already, when you came back after 45 minutes of
4 rescue and the fire department was waiting, can you
5 tell me a little bit about the fire rescue and the
6 Coast Guard rescue that were with you and how long it
7 would take, or if you have a good estimate of how long
8 it would take for them to be part of the rescue?

9 ATC JOHNSON: Okay. Well we were arriving on
10 the scene - we were the first ones on the scene. I
11 could look over and I could see a red fire boat
12 trailing us, you know, but it was almost like they
13 weren't there because we went into action and, you know
14 what I mean, because the boat is a little higher, and
15 we're working off the bow of the boat, off the ramp. I
16 believe, because he was on our starboard side so I
17 didn't really see them. I mean we had gotten everyone
18 into our craft and they were still off our starboard
19 side or to the rear of us.

20 And again, we could see the bodies floating,
21 and we went after them. And I think then at
22 approximately that time I could see, it was like a
23 Baltimore city police boat that had arrived and we were
24 yelling to them because the bodies were actually closer
25 to their boat at that time than they were to us, and we
26 were telling them, "The bodies are over there." You
27 know, we're trying to signal to them. But that current

1 was so quick, the next thing you know, those bodies
2 were over where we were.

3 And the next thing you know they kind of
4 moved their vessel closer to ours, you know, and I
5 think they were over to retrieve one of the bodies out
6 of the water.

7 MR. WOODY: The police boat or the fire boat?

8 ATC JOHNSON: I think it was - it might have
9 been - I'm kind of - I don't know, I thought it was the
10 police boat, you know. I remember black, blue or gray
11 or something. I thought it was them. I remember
12 seeing them over there. Might have been the fire boat.

13 MS. BURER: Right, because they were still
14 behind you, right? They were on the starboard side,
15 on the right?

16 ATC JOHNSON: When we were out sitting out on
17 the water, when I remember seeing the police boat, our
18 vessel was pointed toward the inner harbor.

19 MS. BURER: Okay.

20 ATC JOHNSON: Angled toward the inner harbor.

21 MS. BURER: Towards Fells Point?

22 ATC JOHNSON: (Looking at map.) And this is
23 where we were out here in the water. Well, not that
24 way, we was pointed that way.

25 MR. WOODY: Towards north.

26 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

27 MS. BURER: Okay, and now -

1 MR. WOODY: Where's ... again? Your boat's
2 probably right around here?

3 ATC JOHNSON: No, we were right here facing
4 towards - well, when I say towards, I mean going that
5 way into the harbor, but -

6 MS. BURER: Right, so were you in the middle
7 of the harbor?

8 ATC JOHNSON: We were right there, out there
9 near that green buoy out here.

10 MS. BURER: Okay. The green buoy? Okay, all
11 right.

12 ATC JOHNSON: We weren't far from that green
13 buoy. But we were facing that way, going towards the
14 harbor.

15 MS. BURER: Going towards Fells Point. Is
16 that Fells Point? Yes.

17 ATC JOHNSON: And then - if I could draw -

18 MS. BURER: Yes, that would be wonderful.

19 ATC JOHNSON: I think maybe the buoy was here
20 and then we were like over here, and then the boat -
21 and then the police boat, I remember over there, and
22 then the bodies were like over here. So we were
23 saying, hey, over there, some bodies in the water, and
24 then those bodies kind of seemed like they drifted that
25 way toward our boat.

26 MS. BURER: Okay, and this is you. This is
27 your boat?

1 ATC JOHNSON: Yes. And then we started
2 retrieving the bodies from the water. But I remember
3 the little girl was at the back of the boat, and I
4 think - it might have been a man or a woman - it was a
5 bigger person was back there as well, two of them, and
6 they were trying to hold on to them, but they couldn't
7 and then the woman came up against the boat right here,
8 in the front of the boat.

9 MS. BURER: Okay.

10 ATC JOHNSON: And I remember we brought the
11 girl up on the back, and we brought the woman up on the
12 front -

13 MS. BURER: Right, and this was Tate -

14 ATC JOHNSON: Yes, and King was about right
15 here in the water. And we threw him a line, and I was
16 standing here at first watching him, and then I went
17 here to help the woman. And I remember the little girl
18 we brought up on the boat first and then Petty Officer
19 Dixon was doing CPR on the little girl, and that's when
20 I went back to start checking on King, and then Tate
21 started yelling.

22 MS. BURER: As far as what - do you guys take
23 temperatures of the water at all during the day as part
24 of your regular daily information?

25 ATC JOHNSON: I'm not sure. You might want
26 to pose that question to Petty Officer Tate, because he
27 does a lot of work at the boat.

1 MS. BURER: Okay, wonderful. Okay. I
2 personally don't have any more questions for you.
3 Bill?

4 MR. WOODY: Okay, now as we sit here, I just
5 took some questions. I usually draw a line on my page
6 and I put little questions here rather than interrupt,
7 which I did one time. And then I have questions, so
8 that's why these will be a little out of order.

9 So you mentioned something about transferring
10 personnel to the fire boat. These are victims that you
11 transferred, I presume?

12 ATC JOHNSON: Well, what happened -

13 MS. BURER: Please speak a little louder,
14 please.

15 ATC JOHNSON: I remember the Coast Guard came
16 and the fire boat was there, and it might have been the
17 Coast Guard. They shouted, "Do you have anybody who
18 needs immediate medical attention?"

19 We said, "Yes, we got two bodies we pulled
20 out of the water on our craft." And they began -- I
21 remember they took the lady - they brought a stretcher
22 and they took the lady. And I'm not sure if the fire
23 boat had taken them - I mean the little girl. But I
24 remember that, they asked who needed some medical
25 attention - immediate.

26 MR. WOODY: But one of the boats supplied you
27 with a stretcher for the woman?

1 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

2 MR. WOODY: A s... stretcher? Is that what it
3 would be, a s... stretcher?

4 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

5 MR. WOODY: Metal?

6 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

7 MR. WOODY: And you don't recall for certain
8 whether they were transferred to the fire boat or to
9 the -

10 ATC JOHNSON: Well, I think the one was on
11 the Coast Guard craft. I don't know if the little girl
12 went on the Coast Guard - she might have been on the
13 police boat.

14 MR. WOODY: Do you remember any of the
15 firemen coming on board the LCM, your boat?

16 ATC JOHNSON: I don't remember them coming
17 on. They might have boosted the stuff on when the
18 woman was there, but I don't remember them coming on
19 our craft.

20 MR. WOODY: You mentioned about being taken
21 to Bethesda. How many people were sent down to
22 Bethesda?

23 ATC JOHNSON: I'm going to have to list them
24 - one -

25 MR. WOODY: Oh, if we could get a list of
26 them later, that would be all right. Do you have a
27 list of them?

1 ATC JOHNSON: I don't remember because what
2 happened is I arrived there early, and so they gave me
3 like eighty-one treatments there, and I remember three
4 of us originally, and then some more guys came. I'm
5 going to say - I'm going to estimate about seven of us
6 was there, total. But I left before everyone, because
7 some of the people came and they had them in a
8 different room, and I don't know how many were in that
9 room.

10 MR. WOODY: How did you get down there?

11 ATC JOHNSON: I drove my own car down,
12 because I live in Greenbelt, Maryland.

13 MR. WOODY: Okay, so you drove your own car.
14 Who did you have with you?

15 ATC JOHNSON: By myself.

16 MR. WOODY: Okay, by yourself. Go by
17 yourself, okay. And I think I'm pretty sure the
18 question is your total time on sea, when you were out
19 there working was about 45 minutes, right? Is that
20 correct?

21 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

22 MR. WOODY: And this hook that you hooked the
23 line to, the line on the boat and you put it through
24 the hook on the LCM as I understand it.

25 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

26 MR. WOODY: Is that up on the bow?

27 ATC JOHNSON: Yes, it was on the bow, just

1 where the ramp comes down - it was up at the top
2 corner and it was a hook there, and the rope had an
3 eye, and we just pulled tight and put it on the hook.
4 So we didn't have to keep holding the rope.

5 MR. WOODY: Okay. And people sighted by
6 Tate, and we picked up the conversation that these
7 involved a woman - you describe the woman. Can you
8 describe the woman?

9 ATC JOHNSON: The woman?

10 MR. WOODY: Yes.

11 ATC JOHNSON: I remember that -

12 MR. WOODY: Was she a heavy woman or -

13 ATC JOHNSON: Yes, the woman was really
14 heavy. If I had to say her approximate weight, she
15 might have weighed about two hundred pounds.

16 MR. WOODY: Two hundred pounds, all right.
17 And the little girl, was that the other body?

18 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

19 MR. WOODY: Were there any other bodies
20 besides these two?

21 ATC JOHNSON: I saw another body out in the
22 water, but we didn't retrieve that body. It looked
23 like a man. It looked like he might have been
24 approximately six feet tall, and I remember blue -

25 MR. WOODY: Blue.

26 ATC JOHNSON: Blue clothing or something.

27 MR. WOODY: Okay, and how long were you on

1 scene before you - you realized that there was a fire
2 boat there?

3 ATC JOHNSON: Like I said, when we arrived on
4 the scene, I could look over my shoulder and see them
5 trailing us. So they were on the scene almost as
6 quickly as we were, but they were just trailing us.

7 MR. WOODY: Were there any other boats there
8 at that time? Or did you look around? Did you see any
9 other boats at that time?

10 ATC JOHNSON: No, no. Later on, the police
11 boat came out, I believe the police boat, and I then I
12 think the last person to arrive was the Coast Guard.

13 MR. WOODY: I think that's all the questions
14 I have. That concludes my questions. This is Bill
15 Woody and I turn it to --

16 LT. BARANOWSKI: Lieutenant Scott Baranowski,
17 Coast Guard. Just a few questions regarding - you said
18 you were on scene about 45 minutes.

19 ATC JOHNSON: Uh-huh (yes) approximately.

20 LT. BARANOWSKI: Coming up -- approximate 45
21 minutes. You said that the current was strong, it was
22 drifting, and by this chart here, do you remember
23 exactly what direction it was drifting?

24 ATC JOHNSON: All right.

25 LT. BARANOWSKI: Would you first locate the
26 vessel approximately and which area it was drifting
27 towards.

1 ATC JOHNSON: Okay, if I - let's just mark
2 this right here as being the buoy, the green buoy out
3 there. Now the bodies were like over here, and I would
4 say they were drifting like that. Like that, away,
5 like that.

6 LT. BARANOWSKI: Towards the Key Bridge,
7 then?

8 ATC JOHNSON: Towards the Key Bridge and kind
9 of toward the land as well, like on an angle.

10 LT. BARANOWSKI: Okay. And when you had -
11 about how distance-wise do you guesstimate on how far
12 you did drift during the time period while you were on
13 sea?

14 ATC JOHNSON: Our vessel? We drifted?

15 LT. BARANOWSKI: Yes.

16 ATC JOHNSON: I couldn't really tell. I
17 couldn't really tell. Some of the guys said that we
18 drifted back, you know, towards the Key Bridge.
19 Because it did seem like when we went to go back that
20 we had drifted a lot further than where we were when we
21 started, when we started the process. Because I
22 remember looking out on the craft and I was kind of
23 disoriented, like wow, where is the reserve center at
24 now? You know, because I had to really look around for
25 it. So we did drift.

26 LT. BARANOWSKI: I'm done. No further
27 questions.

1 MS. BURER: Okay, the life preservers -
2 this is Mariette - the life preservers, did you see any
3 of them in the waters when you arrived upon the scene?

4 ATC JOHNSON: No, I didn't see - I didn't see
5 a lot of - I didn't see any life preservers. I don't
6 remember seeing any in the water. But I remember when
7 he kind of tilted that boat, man, it was like littered
8 with a bunch of life preservers all over the water.

9 MS. BURER: Right, and were they floating
10 towards the Key Bridge then, because of the current?

11 ATC JOHNSON: I remember - I couldn't really
12 tell if they were drifting because maybe we were
13 drifting too.

14 MS. BURER: Right.

15 ATC JOHNSON: I just remember seeing them
16 just all out in the water.

17 MS. BURER: I just want to clarify this now
18 because it did raise a question with me. The
19 unconscious people that actually were boarded by your
20 personnel or just got help from your personnel, were
21 there two people, or three or four people? Or anywhere
22 between, I think, ten to twelve passengers, right that
23 were able to, on their own accord, transfer from their
24 craft onto your craft.

25 ATC JOHNSON: Right, because we were kind of
26 walking them, or helping them on.

27 MS. BURER: Right.

1 ATC JOHNSON: Some of them had to climb up
2 out of the water and come up on, from that craft.

3 MS. BURER: Right, but as far as like people
4 who were unconscious?

5 ATC JOHNSON: Floating in the water?

6 MS. BURER: Floating in the water? How many
7 of those?

8 ATC JOHNSON: Just two we pulled in.

9 MS. BURER: Two, okay.

10 ATC JOHNSON: The woman and the little girl.

11 MS. BURER: Okay, and both of them were CPRs?

12 ATC JOHNSON: Yes, they were doing CPR on
13 both.

14 MS. BURER: On both. Okay. And then, do you
15 recall then other boats, rescue boats, whether fire or
16 Coast Guard pulling up other bodies?

17 ATC JOHNSON: Well, I think - it was either
18 the fire boat or the police boat that went after that
19 man, I think they retrieved that man or woman, or
20 whoever was out there in the blue.

21 MS. BURER: Right, and could you estimate
22 your traveling time from when everyone was on board and
23 you were coming back to the Naval Reserve Center - from
24 the point that you were, how long did it take for you
25 to travel back?

26 ATC JOHNSON: I'm going to think it took like
27 four or five minutes, you know, to get back over here,

1 at least.

2 MS. BURER: Okay, I don't have any more
3 questions. Scott, do you?

4 LT. BARANOWSKI: Lieutenant Baranowski, Coast
5 Guard. What type of communications did you hear when
6 you boarded people on your landing craft there - the
7 passengers.

8 ATC JOHNSON: From the passengers?

9 LT. BARANOWSKI: The people you rescued, what
10 type of things were they saying?

11 ATC JOHNSON: Well, I really wouldn't - I
12 didn't really hear them say anything. I remember one
13 thing that one woman said when I grabbed hold of her
14 because I was pulling her on board, and she was like,
15 "Ahhh, my arm is broken." I remember that. And then I
16 remember one gentleman, he came up to me and told me
17 that his son, and I think his girlfriend was still
18 under the water, you know, and then I was sad, and I
19 told him, I said, "Look, sir, you know, there's going
20 to be some divers on the way." You know, I just told
21 him that. And it seemed like - I think he told a few
22 people, my son and his girl friend are still under
23 there. It was kind of a somber mood.

24 LT. BARANOWSKI: So when you took the ... and
25 the people, they're actually resting on the top of the
26 pontoon, or where were they - where did you take these
27 people from?

1 ATC JOHNSON: Some of them was on the top
2 of the boat, and we - they kind of crawled up forward
3 of it as close as they could get to our boat, and then
4 we were reaching out and grabbing them and assisting
5 them to stand up and walk onto our boat, and then, you
6 know, into the back. And then some of them were in the
7 water, had to pull them up out of the water and into
8 our boat. And then you know, we had a line formed, we
9 just helping them move all the way to the back of the
10 boat. So some of them that was on the top, because
11 they were on the top waving at us when we were on our
12 way there. I could see that. And I could hear them
13 when we got closer to them, saying there was somebody
14 under the boat.

15 LT. BARANOWSKI: Did any of the individuals
16 that you took on have any PFDs, life jackets like,
17 wearing anything like that?

18 ATC JOHNSON: I don't remember - I don't
19 remember seeing any of them with life preservers on. I
20 don't remember seeing any. They were all like just -
21 and we told them, when we brought them on the boat, we
22 escorted them as far back as we could, that way you can
23 kind of center on a little bench top that we had there
24 - life preservers. They was kind of resting back
25 there, or on the floor, or wherever they could find a
26 spot.

27 LT. BARANOWSKI: During the time period you
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1 were out there, once again, you clarified for the
2 fire boat, where was the - you said the fire boat was
3 downstream -

4 ATC JOHNSON: This was our boat going out
5 there, going out there, you know, that's our boat
6 headed out.

7 LT. BARANOWSKI: Sure.

8 ATC JOHNSON: The boat - the fire boat was
9 over here on this side, and I looked over and I could
10 see them come in from that direction.

11 LT. BARANOWSKI: And you had your landing
12 area on the vessel trying to get the people off -

13 ATC JOHNSON: Now, we hadn't - when the boat
14 - when I saw the boat, I don't think we had quite begin
15 the process of lowering the ramp. We was almost there,
16 kind of slowing down and you know what I mean? I could
17 feel the boat slowing down, and then I could look over,
18 and I said, that be - because I was wondering - because
19 when we took off, I was like, man, where are the
20 police, you know - we're going to have to go at this
21 one alone. And then like I said, when we started
22 slowing down and I could see them coming over. I'm
23 like, okay, somebody else is coming.

24 LT. BARANOWSKI: And then once the guy - what
25 did you notice of the fire boats after that time
26 period?

27 ATC JOHNSON: I really - I tell you what,
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1 from the time I looked at that boat and then I looked
2 at the people, I didn't even notice that boat because I
3 mean, we went into action, grabbing those people. I
4 wasn't even paying attention to that boat. The only
5 time I remember seeing another boat again was when the
6 bodies came into place, floating, and that's when my
7 attention went to the boats, because when I could see
8 them, I looked to see who was closest to them, and I
9 remember seeing the police boat. And we were - a lot
10 of people were saying "over there, over there, over
11 there."

12 LT. BARANOWSKI: No further questions.

13 ATC JOHNSON: Okay.

14 MS. BURER: I have a couple questions. When
15 - this is regarding the crew. I would like to know how
16 you guys set it up. Do you have assigned people to a
17 boat so when that - when something like this happens,
18 automatically everyone knows that I need to jump into
19 this unit or -

20 ATC JOHNSON: No, we don't have anything like
21 that. This was all spur of the moment.

22 MS. BURER: Okay.

23 ATC JOHNSON: This was - we don't train for,
24 you know, any action like this whatsoever. This was
25 total uncoordination, but it worked out, you know.
26 It's just experience, you know, in the Navy, you get
27 some training on how to react to certain things. I

1 know what was going through my mind was safety first,
2 you know, making sure that my crew - because that's
3 what I'm really concerned about. I want to save as
4 many people as I can, but I want to make sure that my
5 crew is safe as well. And I mean, we all just came
6 together, and I don't know who was advising or what,
7 but kind of knew what we had to do, you know, and we
8 just did it.

9 But there was nothing we ever trained for and
10 said, okay, if anybody going out in the water, you
11 know, we're going to take this boat - you go get the
12 key, or - no, it wasn't like that.

13 MS. BURER: Okay.

14 ATC JOHNSON: I think if we did have
15 something like that in place, we could have probably
16 shaved maybe a minute or two off, you know, because,
17 you know, we had keys, you know, and we had to try a
18 couple of keys to open the door of the vessel to the
19 engine room. But, no, we don't practice.

20 MS. BURER: Okay, so there's no assigned
21 designated personnel for -

22 ATC JOHNSON: No. We ran, and we ran to one
23 boat. We went for the boat. We just happened to pick
24 that one because we had to get people out of the water.

25 MS. BURER: How many people work here on the
26 weekends? Hold on. Let me --

27 ATC JOHNSON: If I had to estimate how many

1 people were here for that drill weekend, I might say
2 hundred fifty.

3 MS. BURER: Is that normal?

4 ATC JOHNSON: (spoke at same time as PA
5 system.

6 MS. BURER: Okay.

7 MR. WOODY: What are those vessels normally
8 used for, the landing craft?

9 ATC JOHNSON: We have a unit, ACUT (ph), that
10 practices with those vessels and they do all kinds of
11 amphibious - you know, like assaults and like maybe
12 practice like dropping off troops or dropping off maybe
13 some kind of tank or - you know, they use that vessel
14 to train with.

15 MS. BURER: And none of the personnel was
16 here for that weekend?

17 ATC JOHNSON: It wasn't their weekend.

18 MS. BURER: Okay. All right.

19 ATC JOHNSON: It just so happened that one of
20 the personnel that was in the Sea Cadets, Petty Officer
21 Stone, formerly used to work for me here at the reserve
22 center. He's an engine man, and Stony used to - that
23 was his department, the boat department. He used to
24 drive the boats around. He just happened to be there
25 that weekend, so he drove the vessel. It just happened
26 to work out that way, you know. So there was no one
27 around here, to me, better qualified than Petty Officer

1 Stone to operate that boat.

2 MS. BURER: Do you guys take the boat out at
3 all during the weekends, just to get comfortable with
4 it, or -

5 ATC JOHNSON: The unit, ACUT (ph), they all
6 take those boats out. They'll practice bumper drills,
7 you know, pulling in, you know, teaching the guys how
8 to operate the boat, doing little checks on the boat.
9 I guess training them on using the little radar systems
10 on the boat. So yes, they do take it out. But we
11 recently - just recently got the boat back here. They
12 were doing re-work in Annapolis since August, so if
13 this would have happened two or three weeks later we
14 wouldn't have been able to respond.

15 MS. BURER: Two or three weeks earlier, you
16 mean?

17 ATC JOHNSON: Yes. Before the accident.

18 MS. BURER: Right.

19 ATC JOHNSON: The boats weren't here.

20 MS. BURER: Okay, so it's been recent that
21 you got the boats back?

22 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

23 MS. BURER: Now, as far as the regular staff
24 that's here on a regular basis, not the reserve people,
25 but the regular staff, do they take the boat out at
26 all?

27 ATC JOHNSON: Sometimes - well, before -
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1 we're in the process of doing a turnover in
2 personnel. So we just got some new personnel and we're
3 in the process of training them and getting those guys
4 geared up so that they'll be just as efficient as Petty
5 Officer Stone was. So we haven't had the opportunity
6 to do a lot of training, because the boats weren't
7 here, so we haven't done that lately. Because the
8 boats not being here and because of the new personnel.
9 But before Petty Officer Stone left, we did take the
10 boats out and we would operate them, we would run them.
11 We had - last year evolution where we had 1500 Naval
12 midshipmen come through here and we shuttled them back
13 and forth to different various points in the inner
14 harbor, driving them all to get familiarization, some
15 kind of - so we used those boats quite a bit during the
16 summer.

17 MS. BURER: Is there a standard for training
18 that you all have?

19 ATC JOHNSON: Couldn't say.

20 MS. BURER: A standard - I mean that when the
21 new people come in, so when you have to turn over and
22 new people come in to get trained on the boat, is there
23 a specific sequence of events that you guys use,
24 whether it's first here on land and then going out and
25 getting familiarized with the boat and doing what types
26 of drills?

27 ATC JOHNSON: Sometimes we get guys that come

1 in that know exactly everything there is to know
2 about the boat because of past experiences and commands
3 they might have served with. They kind of get familiar
4 with just like the engine workings of the aircraft - I
5 mean the craft - how to get it started, what to look
6 for, just inside the boat. Then later, it'll come to
7 where they might, you know, start the boat. Then they
8 might get some practice with ... the boat along with
9 someone who's qualified. But that might take place
10 when the weather gets a little nicer, or along with the
11 units that are already operating the boats.

12 MS. BURER: How long does it take to qualify
13 - to become a boat operator?

14 ATC JOHNSON: Well, that's not - you might
15 want to pose that question to Petty Officer Tate,
16 because they're more qualified to answer that than I
17 am.

18 MS. BURER: Okay. Is everyone here, I guess,
19 on the regular full-time basis here, are they all
20 trained in first responder or first aid or CPR or any
21 of that stuff?

22 ATC JOHNSON: No. I have two corpsmen that
23 we have here on staff. You know, they are trained in
24 CPR and things like that, but most of my staff is
25 strictly an admin staff.

26 MS. BURER: Okay. I have no further
27 questions.

1 LT. BARANOWSKI: Lieutenant Baranowski,
2 Coast Guard. What does ACU stand for?

3 ATC JOHNSON: You've got me on that one.
4 I'll have to research that one and get back with you.

5 LT. BARANOWSKI: That's no problem.

6 MR. WOODY: I would just like to - Asa is A-
7 S-A?

8 ATC JOHNSON: Yes.

9 MR. WOODY: A-S-A. And your middle initial?

10 ATC JOHNSON: I don't have one.

11 I think it might stand for assault craft
12 unit, but I want to research it before I shoot off the
13 cuff, you know what I mean?

14 MR. WOODY: Sure, no problem.

15 MS. BURER: Could you - would you mind please
16 acknowledging that this conversation has been tape
17 recorded?

18 ATC JOHNSON: I acknowledge this conversation
19 has been tape recorded.

20 MS. BURER: Okay, thank you.

21 (Whereupon, the interview in the above
22 captioned matter was concluded.)

23